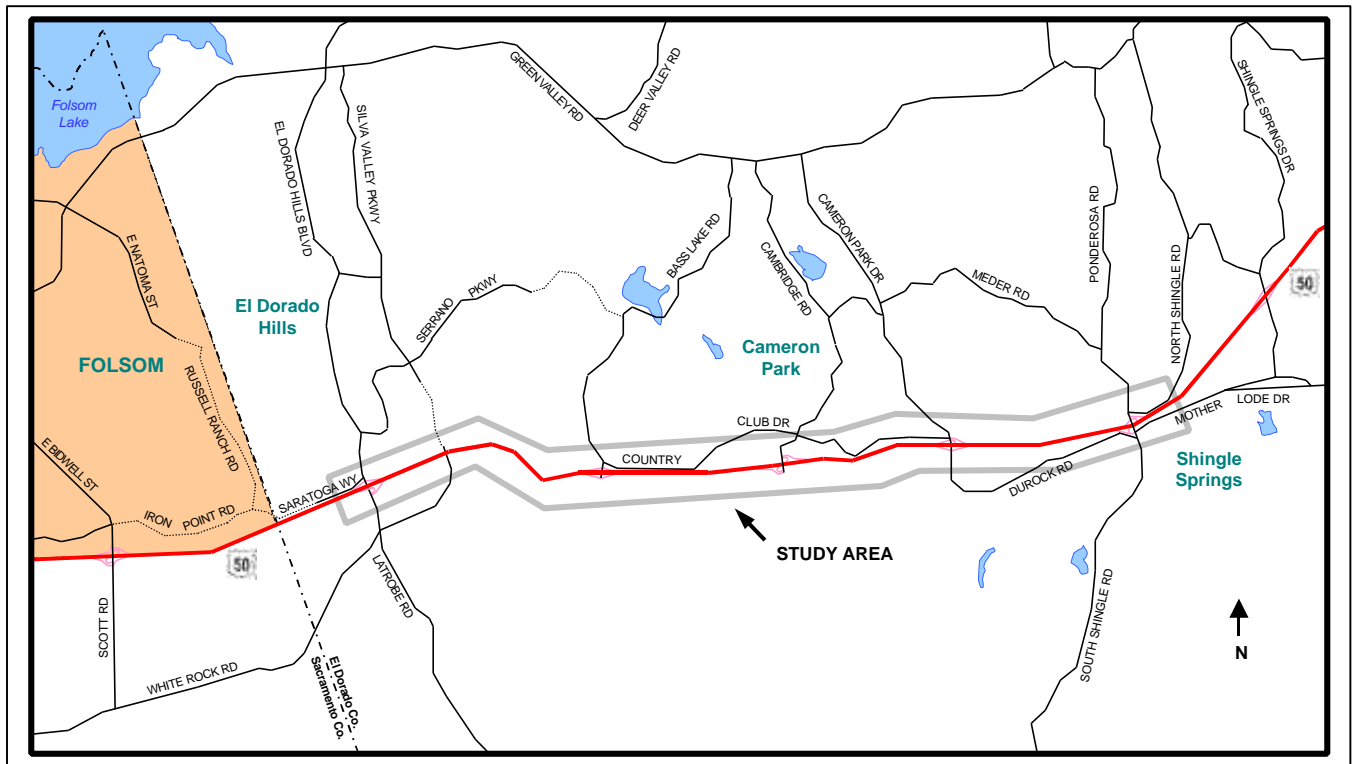


**U.S. 50**  
**High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes Project**  
El Dorado Boulevard to South Shingle Road/Ponderosa Road  
KP 0.25/R14.67 (PM 0.16/R9.11)  
El Dorado County, California

**Draft**  
**Initial Study/**  
**Environmental Assessment**



December 2001

## NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

### Description

The proposed project would add two high-occupancy vehicle (HOV, or carpool) lanes (one eastbound and one westbound) in the median of U.S. 50 in western El Dorado County from the El Dorado Hills Boulevard Undercrossing to South Shingle Road/Ponderosa Road Overcrossing [KP 0.25/R14.67 (PM 0.16/R9.11)]. The project also would include bridge modifications, lighting improvements, new overlay, and CHP enforcement areas.

### Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). On the basis of this study, it is determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect upon the environment for the following reasons:

The project will have no effects on farmland, geology and soils, air quality, floodplain, the community, or public services and utilities. With proposed mitigation measures, the project will not result in impacts related to visual quality, biological resources (including wetlands), water quality, noise, or cultural resources. The project will not be inconsistent with any adopted community plan.

Proposed mitigation measures are:

- Caltrans/FHWA recommend two soundwalls as noise abatement; Caltrans/FHWA will poll affected residents to determine whether the soundwalls will be constructed.
- Caltrans/FHWA will incorporate landscaping into soundwall design, if soundwalls are constructed.
- Caltrans/FHWA will comply with USFWS stipulations for mitigation of any elderberry impacted by the project.
- Caltrans/FHWA will designate ESAs for other elderberry shrubs and for cultural resources in the project area.
- Caltrans/FHWA will replace affected oak trees pursuant to CDFG Oak Protection Guidelines.
- Caltrans/FHWA will compensate for approximately 0.01 ha (0.03 ac) of perennial wetland and 0.05 ha (0.13 ac) of seasonal wetland at a 2:1 ratio at Caltrans' Beach Lake Mitigation Bank if soundwalls are constructed.
- The contractor will remove Cliff Swallow nests at Clarksville Road Undercrossing and Bass Lake Road Undercrossing prior to construction.
- The contractor will comply with Caltrans Standard Specifications for air quality; water quality; and for the testing, removal, disposal, and handling of hazardous materials.

Mitigation monitoring will be in accordance with procedures outlined in Section 1-2.7 of Volume 1 of Caltrans Environmental Handbook.

---

Kome Ajise, Division Chief  
North Region Environmental Management  
and Transportation Planning

SCH No. \_\_\_\_\_  
03-ED-50  
EA 03-3A7100

**U.S. 50**  
**High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes Project**  
**El Dorado Boulevard to South Shingle Road/Ponderosa Road**  
**KP 0.25/R14.67 (PM 0.16/R9.11)**  
**El Dorado County, California**

**Initial Study/  
Environmental Assessment**

prepared by

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
Federal Highway Administration, and  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Department of Transportation

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13 Public Resources Code  
and (Federal) 42 USC 4332 (2)(C)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Approval

\_\_\_\_\_  
JOHN D. WEBB, Chief  
North Region Environmental Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Approval

\_\_\_\_\_  
MICHAEL G. RITCHIE  
Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration

## **PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT**

The purpose of this document is to present to the public the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project and its alternatives.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) prepared this Initial Study/ Environmental Assessment in compliance with both state and federal laws. The Initial Study has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15063; and because the project is receiving federal as well as state funds, Caltrans prepared the Environmental Assessment as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 USC 4332(2)(C).

Caltrans is concerned about how each of its projects could impact the environment. Laws and regulations provide guidelines Caltrans follows for minimizing project impacts to the environment. Thus, the proposed project is intended to accomplish its objectives while avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating impacts to environmental and community resources.

Comments regarding the circulation of this document may be addressed to:

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Attn: Nancy MacKenzie, Associate Environmental Planner

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## **1.0 NEED AND PURPOSE FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

### **1.1 Proposal to Widen U.S. 50**

The proposed project would add two high-occupancy vehicle (HOV, or carpool) lanes (one eastbound and one westbound) in the median of U.S. 50 in western El Dorado County from the El Dorado Hills Boulevard Undercrossing to South Shingle Road/Ponderosa Road Overcrossing [KP 0.25/R14.67 (PM 0.16/R9.11)] (Figure 1). Study of HOV lanes within the project area was funded by the Regional Transportation Improvement Program. The El Dorado County Transportation Commission (EDCTC) initiated study of the project. The estimated project capital cost is from \$32 million to \$39.9 million, depending on construction scenario (see “Phasing” discussion, page 15). Construction funds would be programmed through the State Transportation Improvements Program (STIP). The project is a Category 4A project because it would increase traffic capacity substantially but would not require a revised freeway agreement. No funds are programmed beyond this environmental compliance phase. The project would require approximately two construction seasons to construct.

### **1.2 Need for the Proposed Project**

The proposed project is needed to alleviate existing commute congestion and to accommodate traffic demands associated with current and planned residential and employment growth in eastern Sacramento and western El Dorado counties and the City of Folsom. These communities identify the U.S. 50 corridor as a key to the regional transportation system and rely on it as a means of safe, efficient movement of people and goods through the region.

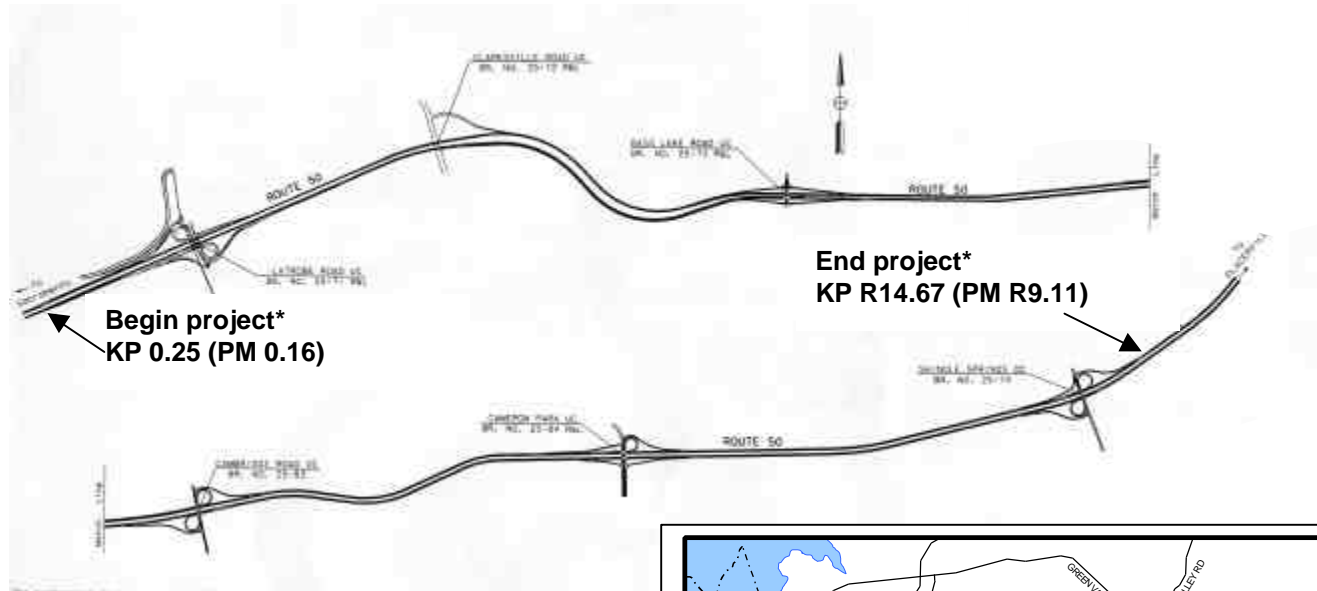
In addition, two major sources of air quality degradation in El Dorado County are meteorological and terrain conditions that result in the intrusion of poor quality air from the Sacramento metropolitan area and vehicle emissions from travel within El Dorado County. Effective transportation systems will play an important role in the improvement and preservation of air quality in El Dorado County and the region.

The following discussion summarizes the background of the proposed lane addition project and provides justification for the project based on existing system deficiencies and future conditions within the corridor.

#### **1.2.1 Land Use and Travel Growth Forecasts**

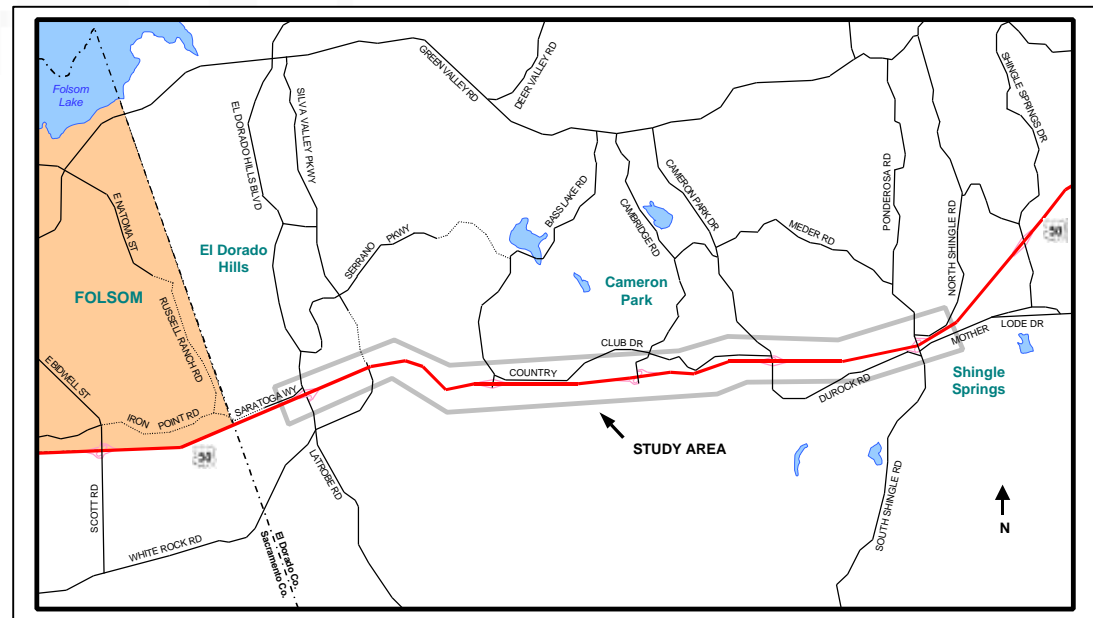
During the past several years, population and employment growth in the eastern portions of Sacramento County and the western portion of El Dorado County have substantially increased travel demand on U.S. 50. Specifically, increases in commute travel volumes arise from the growing communities of El Dorado Hills, Bass Lake, Cameron Park and Shingle Springs, which serve as residential communities to employment centers in Sacramento County (for example, Folsom, Rancho Cordova, and downtown Sacramento). Interregional travel demand associated with year-round recreation areas east of the project in the Tahoe Basin have also contributed to the increased traffic.





\*Arrows are approximate.

**Figure 1  
Project Location**



The capacity of U.S. 50 has not increased with travel demand. Population and employment projections in both Sacramento County and El Dorado County indicate that this growth trend will continue and, as a result, will further degrade peak-hour traffic operations on U.S. 50, leading to Level of Service (LOS) F (a qualitative means of describing traffic conditions, see Table 1). According to the El Dorado County General Plan, the LOS standard for this section of U.S. 50 is E. Currently, U.S. 50 within the project area generally operates at a LOS E or better; however, the operation of the highway in the western portion of the project area, during weekday peak periods, often falls to LOS F. The level of service for the entire project area is expected to drop to LOS F by the year 2007. By the year 2017, demand is expected to exceed the capacity of the facility by 1.63 times with two or more hours of delay.

<b>Table 1</b> <b>Level of Service Criteria</b>	
<b>LOS</b>	<b>Description</b>
A	Free flow conditions. Individual users are virtually unaffected by the presence of others in the traffic stream. Freedom to select desired speeds; high maneuverability.
B	Stable flow, but the presence of others in the traffic stream begins to be noticeable. Freedom to select desired speeds but a slight decline in maneuverability.
C	Stable flow, but users become affected considerably by interactions with others in the traffic stream. Selection of speed is affected by presence of others; lowered maneuverability.
D	High-density but stable flow. Speed and freedom to maneuver are severely restricted.
E	Unstable flow. Operating conditions are at or near capacity. All speeds are reduced to a low, relatively uniform value. Queues begin to form and maneuverability extremely difficult.
F	Jammed, forced-flow conditions.

### 1.2.2 Existing Capacity Problems

Table 2 shows annual average daily traffic (both directions of travel) for each location and year indicated. The total volume distribution can be considered as 50 percent in each direction over the course of a day, although the actual volume split throughout the day varies substantially, especially during the AM and PM peak periods.

From 1993 to 1999, the average daily volumes at the Sacramento/El Dorado County line increased 38 percent as a result of significant new residential and commercial development. On the other end of the project area, the increases over the same period was only 3 percent which reflects the lower development growth rate east of Shingle Springs.

**Table 2. Mainline Volumes**

LOCATION	ANNUAL ADT			
	1993	1995	1997	1999
E. Bidwell St./Scott Rd. to El Dorado Hills Blvd./Latrobe Rd.	48,500	49,000	51,000	67,000
El Dorado Hills Blvd./Latrobe Rd. to Bass Lake Rd.	46,000	46,000	47,500	60,000
Bass Lake Rd. to Cambridge Rd.	45,500	46,000	47,000	54,000
Cambridge Rd. to Cameron Park Dr.	47,000	47,000	47,500	53,000
Cameron Park Dr. to Ponderosa Rd./South Shingle Rd.	50,000	51,000	52,000	55,000
Ponderosa Rd./South Shingle Rd. to Shingle Springs Dr.	44,000	44,000	44,500	45,500

Caltrans Office of Traffic Operations conducted peak-hour traffic counts on the mainline and at the ramps during Spring 1999 (Table 3). In the westbound direction, the mainline peak-hour volume increases from 1,936 vehicles per hour (vph) east of Ponderosa Road to 3,801 vph west of El Dorado Hills Boulevard. The on-ramp volumes are particularly high from northbound Ponderosa Road (670 vph), Bass Lake Road (711 vph), and El Dorado Hills Boulevard (1,033 vph).

As expected, the off-ramp traffic is much lower with only the El Dorado Hills Boulevard ramp (620 vph) over 500 vph. In the eastbound direction, the PM peak hour volume decreases from 3,751 vph west of Latrobe Road to 2,270 vph east of South Shingle Road. The largest on-ramp volume is at Latrobe Road (828 vph). The heavy off-ramp volumes are at Latrobe Road (959 vph) and South Shingle Road (875 vph).

A majority of the congestion for the U.S. 50 corridor has been concentrated around the El Dorado Hills Boulevard/Latrobe Road interchange. The congestion primarily occurs in the westbound direction during the morning commute due to the heavy on-ramp volume from El Dorado Hills Boulevard. In the eastbound direction during the afternoon commute, the on-ramp traffic from Latrobe Road and the grade after the ramp are causes of the congestion.

In 1999, the westbound morning commute experienced congestion from east of Bass Lake Road to east of East Bidwell Street/Scott Road from 6:15 AM to 7:30 AM. In the eastbound direction during the evening commute, the congestion extends from the El Dorado/Sacramento County line to west of Latrobe Road and lasts from 4:45 PM to 6:00 PM.

**Table 3. Existing Traffic Volumes (1999)**

LOCATION	TYPE	AM / PM	VOLUME		% OCCUPANCY		
			Peak Hour	Peak Period	1	2	3+
Mainline Route 50	EB Mainline	PM	3751	10059	80.0	17.0	3.0
	WB Mainline	AM	3801	10483	-	-	-
El Dorado Hills Boulevard/ Latrobe Road	EB Loop Off	PM	959	2544	-	-	-
	EB Diag On	PM	828	2003	77.5	17.0	5.5
	WB Diag Off	AM	620	1557	-	-	-
	WB Diag On	AM	1033	2971	91.3	7.1	1.6
Bass Lake Road	EB Diag Off	PM	465	1178	-	-	-
	EB Diag On	PM	38	87	70.0	25.0	5.0
	WB Diag Off	AM	24	64	-	-	-
	WB Diag On	AM	711	1656	87.4	10.9	1.7
Cambridge Road	EB Diag Off	PM	409	1085	-	-	-
	EB Loop On	PM	231	714	65.5	25.5	9.0
	WB Diag Off	AM	319	588	-	-	-
	WB Loop On	AM	488	1250	81.9	13.6	4.5
Cameron Park Drive	EB Diag Off	PM	645	1787	-	-	-
	EB Diag On	PM	699	2005	78.5	18.5	3.0
	WB Diag Off	AM	492	1390	-	-	-
	WB Loop On	AM	151	466	79.6	15.3	5.1
	WB Slip On	AM	354	917	82.8	12.9	4.3
Ponderosa Road/ South Shingle Road	EB Diag Off	PM	875	2466	-	-	-
	EB Loop On	PM	258	778	69.5	25.0	5.5
	WB Diag Off	AM	290	1168	-	-	-
	WB Loop On	AM	670	1758	84.3	12.6	3.1
	WB Slip On	AM	499	742	88.6	9.2	2.2
Mainline Route 50	EB Mainline	PM	2270	6274	-	-	-
	WB Mainline	AM	1936	5384	84.4	13.1	2.5

Source: District 3, Office of Traffic Operations – Sacramento

### 1.2.3 Safety Concerns

The eastbound direction experienced 114 (46 percent) of a total of 247 collisions over the three-year period reported, with two fatalities (Table 4). There were 133 collisions with no fatalities in the westbound direction. A comparison of the actual to the average accident rates for similar highway facilities showed the actual rates were lower in the eastbound direction, while the westbound direction rates were slightly higher for "Fatal Plus Injury" collisions.

**Table 4. Collision Summary  
(07-01-97 to 06-30-00)**

Dir.	Location Description (Post Mile Limits)	Actual Collision Rate (acc/mvm)*			Average Collision Rate (acc/mvm)*		
		Fatal	F+I**	Total	Fatal	F+I**	Total
EB	Latrobe Rd. (PM 0.870) to South Shingle Rd. (PM R8.513)	0.009	0.24	0.54	0.011	0.25	0.65
WB	Ponderosa Rd. (PM R8.513) to El Dorado Hills Blvd. (PM 0.870)	0.000	0.32	0.63	0.011	0.25	0.65

\* Collisions per million vehicle-miles

\*\* Fatal Plus Injury

Source: Traffic Collision Surveillance and Analysis System

Thirty-nine percent (39 percent) of all westbound collisions were rear-end type collisions and 30 percent were hit objects. Thirty-five percent (35 percent) of total eastbound collisions reported for the three-year period was rear-end type collisions and 33 percent were hit objects. In addition, approximately 35 percent and 31 percent of all collisions occurred during the morning (westbound) and afternoon (eastbound) peak periods, respectively. This suggests that slowdowns and congestion are sources of collisions within the project area. Therefore, any reduction in congestion that this project provides should contribute to a decrease in delays and lower overall collision rates.

### 1.3 Existing Facility

The existing facility is a four-lane divided freeway, constructed in the late 1960s. The highway has no median barrier, except at spot locations and a 0.4 km (1/4-mi) section east of the Bass Lake Road Undercrossing (UC). Existing lane widths are 3.6 m (12 ft). Outside shoulders vary from 2.4 m (8 ft) to 3.0 m (10 ft). Inside shoulders are approximately 1.5 m (5 ft). The U.S. 50 median width varies within project limits. In the Bass Lake Grade (roughly from Clarksville UC to Bass Lake Road UC), the roadbed alignment is split with variable median width of 12.6 m (41 ft) to 51.0 m (167 ft). East of Bass Lake Road, the median width varies from 14.0 m (46 ft) to 52 m (171 ft).

Within the project limits, there are five existing interchanges. These interchanges are: 1) a modified type L-1/L-8 interchange at El Dorado Hills Boulevard, 2) a Type L-1 compact diamond interchange at Bass Lake Road, 3) a Type L-7 partial cloverleaf interchange at Cameron

Park Drive, 4) and a modified type L-1/L-9 partial cloverleaf/compact diamond interchange at Ponderosa Road/South Shingle Road. The interchange at El Dorado Hills is the subject of a Project Report approved by Caltrans in June 2000; the Project Report proposes to improve ramps, add new ramps, and relocate a frontage road intersection. Other projects proposed adjacent to or within the project area are discussed under Section 1.6, Related Projects.

## **1.4 Purpose and Objectives of the Proposed Action**

A multidisciplinary Caltrans team, in its effort to solve or lessen the traffic problems caused by insufficient capacity, developed the following major objectives for the proposed action:

- Improve existing traffic operations,
- Increase the people-moving capacity within the U.S. 50 corridor, and
- Provide additional opportunity and incentive for ridesharing.

Benefits of the proposed project would include:

- Reduced congestion
- Improved level of service
- Improved safety
- Improved air quality
- Increased multiple passenger vehicle use

The proposed project would extend capacity improvements easterly from the HOV lanes currently under construction between Sunrise Boulevard in Sacramento County and El Dorado Hills Boulevard in El Dorado County.

Caltrans has studied two alternatives for implementing the above objectives. In accordance with CEQA requirements, the Caltrans design team also studied the No Project Alternative although it would not achieve project objectives. The No Project Alternative would maintain the roadway's current configuration. Section 2.0 discusses the proposed action and its alternatives.

## **1.5 History of Planning and Scoping Process**

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) High Occupancy Vehicle Planning Study for the Sacramento Metropolitan Area (1990) recommended HOV lanes be added to U.S. 50 between the downtown area of the city of Sacramento and Shingle Springs in El Dorado County. HOV lanes on U.S. 50 also are consistent with the provisions of SACOG's 1999 Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

## **1.6 Related Projects**

A number of transportation projects are planned or under construction within or adjacent to the project area in the U.S. 50 corridor. The proposed project does not conflict with any of these

projects, and in fact, is consistent with the following projects which are part of a regional effort to increase the capacity of the U.S. 50 corridor.

- An HOV lane project is currently under construction from Sunrise Boulevard to El Dorado Hills Boulevard, which is adding an additional lane in each direction for HOV use within the existing median.
- Improvements to the El Dorado Hills Boulevard-Latrobe Road interchange on U.S. 50 are proposed. The project would include improvements to the alignment of the interchange on- and off-ramps, widening El Dorado Hills Boulevard-Latrobe Road from four to six lanes to provide dual left-turn lanes at the eastbound and westbound on-ramp intersections, widening of the U.S. 50 bridge structure, and realigning Saratoga Way to intersect with Park Drive. The project design provides for the proposed widening of U.S. 50 to the east. Local funds are committed to this project and construction is scheduled to begin in 2002.
- A Project Report for a new interchange at Silva Valley Parkway was completed in 1991. The proposed project would construct a type L-9, partial-cloverleaf interchange about 1.6 km (1 mi) east of the El Dorado Hills Boulevard/Latrobe Road interchange. The project also includes auxiliary lanes to the El Dorado Hills Boulevard/Latrobe Road interchange for both directions of U.S. 50. The 1999 Metropolitan Transportation Plan shows a projected completion year of 2008.
- In 1998, the EDCTC, working with Caltrans and the El Dorado County Department of Transportation (DOT), funded the Bass Lake Grade Truck Climbing Lane Project. This project added one eastbound lane in the existing U.S. 50 median from approximately 0.3 km (0.2 m) east of the Clarksville Road UC and continuing to 0.51 km (0.32 mi) east of the Bass Lake Road UC, approximately 2.72 km (1.7 mi). The addition allows the use of the existing eastbound outside lane as a truck climbing lane. Construction was completed Fall 2000.
- The El Dorado County DOT is proposing to widen a number of roads adjacent to U.S. 50 in the project area, from two to four lanes, to accommodate traffic from existing and planned growth, including Cambridge Road, Cameron Park Drive, and Latrobe Road. These and other road widening projects are included in the 2000/01 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (SACOG) but their construction is not anticipated in the near-term.
- A future Folsom/El Dorado East Rail Line that would extend rail service from the future Sacramento-to-Folsom Light Rail extension to the vicinity of El Dorado Hills multi-modal facility. The light rail extension is included in the Highway 50 Corridor Capacity Study (12/98) prepared by EDCTC, the City of Folsom, and the Folsom-El Dorado Joint Power Authority.

Consistent with commercial and residential zoning along the U.S. 50 corridor within the project area, a number of developments are under construction and others have been approved.

## **1.7 Support for the Project**

The project has received support from the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), an association of 23 city and county governments, which programmed study and environmental review of the project in its 1998/99 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program.

The project is supported by the El Dorado County Transportation Commission (EDCTC), which initiated the project study; the El Dorado County Department of Transportation; and the El Dorado County Transit Authority (EDCTA). In its letter to Caltrans (11/2/99), the EDCTA stated that “a key component to continuing the success of the current commuter service are HOV lanes on the Highway 50 corridor.”

Caltrans and the EDCTC anticipate that the project will receive general support from the public and that the main area of concern will be whether the added lanes are carpool or mixed use. Caltrans will receive feedback on the project during public circulation of the environmental document when it also will host a public information workshop.

## **2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ITS ALTERNATIVES**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the proposed action and the design alternatives that were developed by a Caltrans multi-disciplinary team to achieve project objectives while reducing or eliminating environmental impacts. The alternatives are Alternative 1, Add HOV Lanes (Preferred Alternative); Alternative 2, Add Mixed-Flow Lanes; and the No-Build Alternative. The potential environmental impacts of each alternative are discussed. This chapter includes a discussion of the No Project Alternative that was studied by the Caltrans team as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

### **2.2 Alternatives Considered**

Alternatives being considered include whether new lanes would be designated as HOV lanes or mixed-flow lanes or the no-project alternative. Depending on HOV lane or mixed-flow lane designation, the lane drops/transitions would differ. While the HOV lanes alternative has been identified as the preferred alternative, selection of a preferred alternative will not be made until after the public circulation period. Criteria used for the alternative evaluation include:

- Traffic performance measures (i.e., vehicle-hours of delay, person hours of delay, etc.)
- Air quality impacts (local and regional)
- Benefits of continuity of the U.S. 50 HOV system, and
- Policy issues relative to implementation of U.S. 50 Major Investment Study alternatives.

#### **2.2.1 The Proposed Action**